

G

August 22, 2001

Barry County Board of Commissioners

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in response to learning about the reassignment of liaison officer, Dar Leaf. First, Dar has done an outstanding job for us. He has successfully filled many roles in the discharge of his duties. I have very much enjoyed working with him the past three years. He has remained flexible, as we need in the education field; and performed at an outstanding level since starting with us.

Second, as to his reassignment, the position of liaison officer is not one that you put a warm body in and it gets done. It is a position that is built up over the years by a special person. Dar has done just that. His removal from that position just destroys all that he has built up and worked for. For someone to arbitrarily remove someone from a position like this is unconscionable. To not even consider or get input from those affected is inexcusable.

Dar has built a highly respected position out of liaison officer and to be removed from it without justification can only lead someone to one conclusion: his removal had absolutely nothing to do with his job performance. What a travesty!

Sincerely,



Rik Zelenock
Counselor
Delton Kellogg Middle School

DELTON SCHOOLS KELLOGG

Gary Kimble, Principal
Sharon Purdy, Assistant Principal
Delton Kellogg Middle School
327 North Grove Street Delton, Michigan 49046
Ph: 616-623-9275 Fax: 616-623-9259

Knowledge • Responsibility • Confidence • Success

August 22, 2001

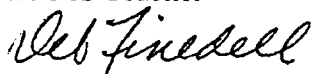
Barry County Board of Commissioners

To Whom It May Concern:

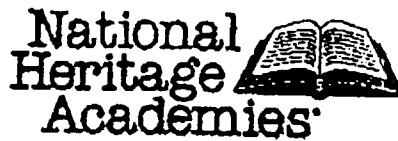
We are extremely disappointed in the news that Deputy Dar Leaf will no longer be involved with the students and staff at DKMS. He will truly be missed. His influence has been tremendous.

Sincerely,

Deb Finedell
DKMS Teacher



Paul Krajacic
DKMS Teacher



Endeavor Charter Academy

August 17, 2001

380 N. Helmer Rd.
Springfield, Michigan 49018
Phone: (616) 962-9300
Fax: (616) 962-9393
www.heritageacademies.com

To Whom It May Concern:

The past eleven years I served as the Principal at Delton Kellogg Middle School. During that time the county wide, school-home liaison was implemented with officer Dar Leaf serving as the liaison officer.

Over the past three years the program has improved and broadened with the hard work and relationship that Dar has developed with the schools, administration and students. I feel this has been due to the fact that Dar has been the one constant person within that framework.

At Delton, Dar was a part of our weekly building administrative-counselor meeting where we discussed students, with Drn being a very active member. He has developed many relationships with students and staff and I feel it would be a step backwards if Dar Leaf were taken out of Deiton Kellogg Middle School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary R. Kimble".

Gary R. Kimble, former Principal

August 22, 2001

To Whom This May Concern:

Dar Leaf has been Delton Kellogg Schools Liaison officer for the past three years. As the principal's administrative assistant, I have had the opportunity to observe Officer Leaf with staff and students.

When Dar took the position as liaison officer for the school, he quickly established a positive rapport with staff and students gaining much respect. Dar met regularly with administration and counselors to stay current with the happenings of the school and student body. Officer Leaf reflects an understanding of students who are in an at-risk position and works on building positive relationships with these students to the point that a few students have sought him out to talk to him regarding problems they are having. Because of this I feel that putting a new officer in his position would not be the best thing for the program as I believe it will take time to rebuild what Officer Leaf has now accomplished in the past three years.

Sincerely,



Brenda Conine
Administrative Assistant
Delton Kellogg Middle School

DELTON SCHOOLS KELLOGG

Gary Kimble, Principal
Sharon Purdy, Assistant Principal
Delton Kellogg Middle School
327 North Grove Street Delton, Michigan 49046
Ph: 616-623-9275 Fax: 616-623-9259

Knowledge • Responsibility • Confidence • Success

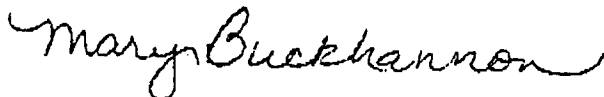
August 24, 2001

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in regards to Deputy Dar Leaf. Mr. Leaf has been the Delton Kellogg Schools Liaison officer for three years. I have been a teacher in the building and recently accepted the position of assistant principal. I have had the opportunity to observe first hand the positive influence Officer Leaf has had on the students and staff in the Delton Middle School.

Mr. Leaf is man committed to his role as liaison officer. Dar quickly established relationships with staff and students and gained the respect of all. Dar demonstrated a caring attitude for the students at Delton and has been extremely supportive of our efforts to improve the quality of our students educational experience. Students are aware of his presence and see he as someone they can go to for assistance. Dar met on a regular basis with our administrators and counselors to stay abreast of the current happenings in our school. For these reasons, I feel that putting a new officer in his position would not be in the best interests of the program or those involved. It is my feeling it will take a great amount of time to rebuild what Officer Dar Leaf has now accomplished in the past three years. Please reconsider this matter.

Sincerely,



Mary Buckhannon
Assistant Principal
Delton Kellogg Middle School

DELTON SCHOOLS KELLOGG

Gary Kimble, Principal
Sharon Purdy, Assistant Principal
Delton Kellogg Middle School
327 North Grove Street Delton, Michigan 49046
Ph: 616-623-9275 Fax: 616-623-9259

Knowledge • Responsibility • Confidence • Success

August 22, 2001

Barry County Board of Commissioners

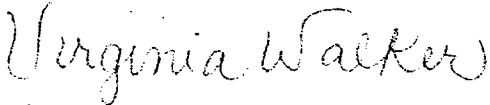
To Whom It May Concern:

As the person who runs the Problem Solving Room at Delton Kellogg Middle School, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Deputy Dar Leaf. I am greatly concerned of the news that he has been reassigned.

Dar has a great rapport with the students and staff at DKMS. Dar was always meeting with administrators, staff, students, counselors as well as myself, in order to maintain up to the minute knowledge of a variety of situations that occur in a Middle School setting.

I am very disappointed that the people who this will affect the most, were not consulted as to whether this would be a beneficial move or not. I hope in the future, you will consider the needs of others prior to making such a decision. Dar will be greatly missed.

Sincerely,



Virginia Walker
Problem Solving Room

Letters support Deputy Leaf in school program; details shared about home funding program

by Elaine Gilbert
Assistant Editor

Area school districts want Deputy Dar Leaf to remain as their school liaison officer from the Barry County Sheriff's Department.

Some school personnel and students got their message across by sending letters of support for Leaf to the Barry County Board of Commissioners.

Apparently, County Sheriff Steve DeBoer wants to remove Leaf from his duties in the DISTANCE grant program, which is the acronym for deputy in school to aid, nurture, care and educate. It remains unclear whether Leaf's removal is official or proposed, but a secretary at an area school said Leaf is currently making weekly visits.

DeBoer and Undersheriff Don Ford could not be reached for comment Wednesday about why Leaf's liaison duties may end.

At Tuesday's County Board meeting, it was noted that a grievance has been filed on behalf of Leaf concerning the matter. Leaf said Wednesday that he could not answer any questions about the subject.

Commissioner Clare Tripp, who said Leaf "has done his job well" and "is popular," said she asked DeBoer about the matter, but "he didn't give me an answer as to why."

"He doesn't have to answer to the County Commission, but he does have to answer to the parent," Commissioner Tom Wing said.

County Board Chairman Jeff MacKenzie explained that the County Board does not have a role in the "internal politics" of the

Sheriff's Department, noting that the sheriff's post is an elected position.

MacKenzie said the letters would be forwarded to the sheriff.

Letters complimenting Leaf were received from Delton Middle School staff, a letter from a former middle school principal, letters from three Hastings students, a letter from Lakewood School District staff and others. MacKenzie read portions of some of the letters.

A letter from one of the students said "he (Leaf) is a very good role model for sixth graders...I ask of you to chose wisely in your decision about removing Deputy Dar Leaf...He has kept me out of trouble and on target."

A Delton administrator wrote that Leaf "had demonstrated a caring attitude for the students at Delton" and supported the school's efforts to improve educational experiences.

He is an effective communicator with students, another letter said.

"To change personnel at this time would have a negative impact on this program...", the letter said.

Leaf has created an "atmosphere of trust and respect" with students, a Lakewood staff member said.

The County Board also heard details about a new state Home Funding grant the county has received to assist home buyers and to acquire and rehabilitate homes for low to moderate income families.

Local Community Development Block Grant Administrator Cheryl Barth gave some examples of eligibility. She said a

one-person family with an income of up to \$23,900 would be eligible and a four-person family with an income of up to \$35,000 would be eligible. The families also have to be "mortgage eligible."

She said when the grant funds are received, the program will be advertised and applications will be available. Families will be chosen on a "first come basis."

There are three different aspects of the grant:

- A total of \$40,000 has been awarded to provide funds for two low to moderate income families to become homeowners by giving each family \$5,000 toward closing costs, down payment assistance and interest buy-down. "After the home buyer purchase a home, moderate rehabilitation of up to \$15,00 per home will be available for total project costs up to \$20,000 per family," according to a written summary provided by Barth & Associates.

- A grant of \$193,300 provides funds for the county to purchase two homes needing rehabilitation and then to re-sell them to low to moderate income families. "Additionally, this program will make available up to \$5,000 per family toward closing costs, down payment assistance and interest buy-down."

- A grant of \$99,000 will finance one "new construction" home to a low to moderate income family and assist the family with up to \$5,000 in down payment assistance.

Village refuses to pay extra for transfer station

by Shawna Hubbarth
Staff Writer

The Nashville Village Council struck down a motion to pay \$1,500 toward operating costs of the Transfer Recycle Station, after Maple Grove and Castleton townships said they have paid \$1,500 more than the village.

Discussion was held at the last meeting about the lack of communication, and the general feeling that the station could be run more efficiently.

Councilman Ralph Kirk, who sits on the transfer recycle committee, was asked to try to locate minutes to any meeting that discussed the payment increase or record ask-

councilman Ed Sheldon at last month's meeting, that he had been charged two different prices for two of the same loads of roofing shingles.

Council President Carroll Wolff said that though former Councilman Mike Beachnau (who sat on the transfer recycle station

FROM OUR READERS

Local Citizens Speak Out On Issues

Deputy makes difference in school

To the editor:

I wish to make the public aware of the tremendous difference that Deputy Sheriff Dar Leaf has had on our school community.

Dar has involved himself in the very core of our middle school system. He is where the kids are. While he is restricted by time – his heart is boundless. Dar has been on our field trips, in our classrooms, at our assemblies, in the cafeteria and recreation areas, and with our staff meetings. Most recently he accompanied a classroom team to a political rally; kids, teachers and parents are thrilled with him.

I was with the planning group in the early meetings when the concept of police/school cooperative

relationships was presented. I remember feeling that this would be a great idea for discipline and truancy matters – but little else, I couldn't foresee any further implications for our school community.

Deputy Leaf has certainly stretched his role much beyond his early directions. He has introduced the notion of "no limitations" in regards to his job with us. Dar has formed summer youth groups, met with parents and students after school hours, helped classrooms with various pre-adolescent issues (not just police matters), and is available to us in any emergency situation. He is honest, creative, informative, knowledgeable and professional. Our children trust him and seek his advice.

I appreciate Dar Leaf as the innovator, developer and "polisher" of this program.

I believe that Dar has stimulated growth throughout the county with his continued positive contact with our middle schools.

Michael A. Spahr,
Principal
Thornapple Kellogg-
Middle School